

# The response of the Dundee churches to the coming of State education

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At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Established Church of Scotland was still secure in its predominant position in educational matters. Yet by mid century that predominance was greatly reduced. Evidence of the growing inadequacy of the old parochial school system can be seen in the setting up, in 1824, of the Education Committee of the General Assembly. Two reasons lay behind its setting up: a genuine desire to extend the means of education in the country, and the wish that children should be given religious instruction in the schools according to the tenets of their own faith. From 1826 on, this standing committee was responsible for opening about twenty schools every year, many of them in the Highlands, but some also in the growing industrial towns.<sup>1</sup> That such a measure was needed to boost educational provision can be seen from the findings of a Parliamentary Inquiry of 1834, which revealed that less than a quarter of schoolchildren were receiving elementary education in parochial schools.<sup>2</sup> While the Established Church and its supporters among the "lairdocracy" remained intransigently opposed to proposed educational reforms, the newly formed Free Church had embarked on its own educational provision with missionary zeal. Within a few years around 590 new schools had been created, which, "with around 590 legal parishes in the country ... seems to represent a remarkable addition to educational provision".<sup>3</sup> In spite, however, of the expansion programmes of the two main Presbyterian churches, the work of the SSPCK, the gradually increasing numbers of Episcopal and Catholic schools, and various private endeavours, the Argyll Commission presented voluminous evidence which could not be ignored. For example, the lack of coordination of effort had left some parts of the country enjoying an embarrassment of schools, and other districts sadly lacking. Of the 510,000 children aged four to fourteen, only 418,000 were on the roll of any school, and less than a quarter of them were in

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<sup>1</sup> J. Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education* (London, 1969), i, 364.

<sup>2</sup> A.L. Drummond and J. Bulloch, *The Church in Victorian Scotland, 1843-1874* (Edinburgh, 1975), 87.

<sup>3</sup> D.J. Withrington, "Adrift among the Reefs of Conflicting Ideals?", in *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, edd. S.J. Brown and M. Fry (Edinburgh, 1993), 79.

the parish schools.<sup>4</sup> Of these 418,000, less than half were at schools visited by Government inspectors.<sup>5</sup>

The increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of Scotland during the nineteenth century is a factor which the church in Scotland has had tremendous difficulty coming to terms with. It is indeed the single most vital background issue which comes up time after time in the pamphlets and debates of the mid-nineteenth century. Callum Brown has summed up well the problem the churches faced:

The growth of cities had a dramatic impact upon religion. The urbanization of the British population which fell mainly between 1780 and 1900 has long been identified with the secularization of habits and popular philosophy, turning attention from the God-made countryside to the man-made industrial centres, and has been associated more directly with the forces which undermined the role of the churches ... The new industrial proletariat became for the Protestant churches the "lapsed masses" and "home heathens" of slum tenements, out of reach of all agencies of civil society.<sup>6</sup>

What was so on a national scale was true also for Dundee. Dundee was a rapidly expanding city in the nineteenth century. The population in 1821 was 30,575. In 1818 a Select Committee of the House of Commons had asked the General Assembly to report on educational provision for the poor (who numbered just over 1000). At that time there were twelve parochial schools.<sup>7</sup> After listing what provision there was the *Digest* went on to observe:

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<sup>4</sup> Scotland, *Scottish Education*, i, 361.

<sup>5</sup> M. Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland* (London, 1970), 84.

<sup>6</sup> C.G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730* (London & New York, 1987), 130. This as a trend which had been developing, in fact, throughout the eighteenth century. The Edinburgh bookseller, William Creech, whose words, admittedly, must be taken with caution, noted how urbanization had affected the religious habits of the capital: "In 1763 – it was fashionable to go to church, and people were interested about religion. Sunday was observed by all ranks as a day of devotion: and it was disgraceful to be seen on the streets during the time of public worship.... In 1783 – Attendance on church was greatly neglected, and particularly by men. Sunday was made by many a day of relaxation; ... The streets were far from being void of people in the time of public worship: and, in the evenings were frequently loose and riotous; particularly owing to bands of apprentice boys and young lads". *Ibid.*, 134-5.

<sup>7</sup> *A Digest of Parochial Returns made to the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Education of the poor: Session 1818*, vol. iii, Wales, Scotland and the British Isles. (Shannon, 1968), 1360.

All the poorer classes are within reach of some of the schools, but many of the poor, particularly widows, and labouring people with very large families, are not able to give the necessary education to their children, but are willing to make very considerable personal sacrifices to procure education to their families. The minister observes, that some of the donations are capable of admitting a much greater number of children on their respective establishments, one of them which has only two boys, being capable of having six instructed at the same rate; and he conceives they require much examination and looking into.<sup>8</sup>

At that time Dundee, along with other major cities, appeared to be well up to the task of catering for the education of the poor. Half a century later the population of Dundee had quadrupled.<sup>9</sup> The number of parochial schools had been increased to only fourteen by 1860, with 1114 on the roll.<sup>10</sup> The Free Church had added significantly to this with twenty-two schools by 1865.<sup>11</sup> The general session school at that time had about 500 pupils.<sup>12</sup> The contribution of the Free Church in particular may have helped to improve the statistics revealed in 1843. Figures were laid before the General Assembly in that year which showed that, taking all kinds of schools into account (including the eight sessional schools which had 1629 pupils on the roll), 9077 were attending some place of schooling, 7146 were not. In percentage terms this means just over 44% attending no kind of school.<sup>13</sup> The statistics do not, of course, specify the ages in question, and this could alter the percentage quite a bit. Nevertheless it is high. And in the debates which ensued in the early 1870s particularly, as education bills were being put before the country, repeated reference is made to the "5000 in Dundee, who are running wild through the streets". those unchurched "street arabs".<sup>14</sup> It may not have been the 20,000 of Glasgow which the Rev.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 1354.

<sup>9</sup> *Charters and Documents Relating to the Burgh of Dundee, 1292-1880* (Dundee, 1880), 229.

<sup>10</sup> Established Presbytery of Dundee Records, 2 May 1860.

<sup>11</sup> Free Church Presbytery Records, 8 March 1865. These were Broughty Ferry, Chalmers' Church (2 schools), Chapelshade, Dudhope, Hilltown, St Andrew's (2 schools), St David's (2 schools), St John's (2 schools). St Paul's (2 schools), St Peter's (2 schools), Liff, Lochec, Longforgan, Mains, Monikie, Tealing, and Millgate.

<sup>12</sup> St Paul's South Kirk Session Records, 20 December 1862.

<sup>13</sup> General Assembly P.P.R. 1843, quoted in Scotland, *Scottish Education*, I, 184.

<sup>14</sup> *Scottish Education: Report of the Committee on Parliamentary Bills, to the General Council of the Dundee Institute, read to a meeting held on Tuesday May, 1869,*



James Johnstone wrote of in 1870<sup>15</sup>, but Dundee's rapid growth had outstripped its educational provision. And this in spite of the Free Church planting schools in some of the more populous poor areas.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, by the mid-nineteenth century, the churches were increasingly losing touch with the populace, only 58.1% of which were attending any place of worship in 1851. This was to drop to 21.9% in 1881, and 15.9% in 1891.<sup>17</sup> If it were not, in fact, for the better attendance of Catholics and Episcopalians, these percentages would have been even lower.<sup>18</sup> In 1850, there had been formed in Dundee a Society of ministers and members of churches:

... to be designed the Dundee Evangelical Christian Instruction Society for the purpose of visiting and communicating religious instruction, to those who have fallen away from attendance in any church.<sup>19</sup>

The problem of Dundee was raised in the Free Church assembly of May 1872 where, in a section on the state of religion and morals, reference was made to the deplorable condition of Dundee:

In Dundee there is an alarming and increasing amount of Sabbath desecration. In some of the rural districts, while a nominal church connection is maintained, a large number go very rarely to any place of worship. One minister says, "The erection of public works has introduced an immigrant

by Peter Begg, and unanimously adopted. (Dundee, 1869). Lamb Collection, eat. no. 42(23), 4.

<sup>15</sup> J. Johnstone, *Religious Destitution in Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1870), 13-19.

<sup>16</sup> Hilltown Free Church Kirk Session Minutes, 4 May 1853. There was a Juvenile School (roll of 150), a school of industry (roll of 70) and an infant school (roll of 150). St Peter's Free Church Kirk-Session Minutes, 7 February 1872, refers to day schools: "These schools meet in the School-Rooms, St Peter Street, and are conducted by Mr George Caird and Miss Newton, assisted by eight Pupil Teachers". Lochee Free Church Kirk-Session Minutes, 12 May 1858. There was a day school of 78 scholars, an evening school of 65, and a Sabbath school of 180 scholars. The Established Presbytery, 4 & 24 August, and 7 November 1849, was showing great concern over the need to provide good schools in the Lochee area.

<sup>17</sup> Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland*, 82-3, table 7. Church-going rates 1835-91 (percentage of the total population attending church).

<sup>18</sup> *The Dundee Year Book for 1881*, gives a breakdown of percentage of attendance to sittings and shows – Episcopalians (Scotch) 82%, Catholic Apostolic 72%, Roman Catholics 66%, while Presbyterian figures were much lower.

<sup>19</sup> Chapelshade Free Church Kirk Session Minutes, 7 January 1850. Concern was also being expressed over desecration of the Sabbath, Established Presbytery Records, 5 August 1846.

population amongst us that to a considerable extent is non-churchgoing. Almost all of these, however, have a nominal connection with the Established Church".<sup>20</sup>

The churches in Dundee had lost much of the adult generation. In the next few decades they were to make a concerted attempt to win over the younger generation, the church of the future.

As the debate over national education got under way, the *quaestio vexata* for churchmen, as Candlish put it, is well summed up by the Rev. William Hetherington of Free St Paul's, Edinburgh. The terms in which he writes on the subject of education strike one as having a very modern ring about them, the sort of thing that could be written by exponents of Christian education today. One of the main points of debate was when exactly religion should be taught. On the subject of not teaching religion during formal timetable hours, he wrote:

It will occur to every person who has any acquaintance with schools, that this would amount to a practical banishment of religious teaching from public schools altogether: for after the children had been actively engaged during four, five, or six hours, in acquiring more secular education, in which we presume, moral and religious motives must not be permitted to enter, they would have little mental and physical energy and power of attention left to bestow on the acquirement of the most momentous of all possible subjects of instruction, Nor would the teacher, if he should attempt it, be in a much better condition to enter on a new arduous task. It is scarce possible to conceive a more ingenious device for causing both children and teachers to regard religious education with positive detestation and disgust, than the desire of having it taught at a separate hour.<sup>21</sup>

Hetherington believed that this approach belittled the subject:

This theory, instead of attempting to convince children that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of God the most important of all knowledge, both for time and for eternity, leaves them to draw their inference, that what occupies least of their time must be of least importance. We

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<sup>20</sup> The Free Church Assembly, Tuesday 24 May, 1872, quoted in *The Dundee Advertiser*, Friday 28 May, 1872, 5.

<sup>21</sup> W.M. Hetherington, *National Education in Scotland, viewed in its present condition, its principles and its possibilities* (Edinburgh, 1850), 10.

have greatly understated the inference. For since religious instruction is to form no part of the system, the inference is, that religion does not necessarily form any part at all of a sound education: that the mind may be thoroughly cultivated though its moral and religious faculties be left entirely out of the system of culture.<sup>22</sup>

He went on to speak in terms of educational theory:

Different theories have, of course, been entertained and promulgated by different men, but all of these theories may be arranged under three classes – the physical, the educational, and the religious.... These theories ought to be combined: but they ought to be so with the full perception that religion is the ruling principle of the whole.<sup>23</sup>

How was this to be safeguarded ?:

The real security for religious education being given in schools, consists in permitting the responsibility to remain where God has placed it, in the Church, in the parent as a member of the Church, and in that part of the teacher's position as duties which places him in relation to both parents and church, entrusted with the duty of communicating religious instruction, and responsibility for the discharge of that duty, not to the State, but to the parents and the Church, from whom conjointly he received the charge and authority.<sup>24</sup>

Although the picture with regard to church control over schools prior to 1872 is not as clear as we might like, the following can be said for the Dundee area. Parochial schools, Assembly and sessional schools, and even burgh schools with the cooperation of the town council, were the subject of presbyterial visitations, reports to presbytery, and schedules sent to the Secretary of the Education Committee in Edinburgh.<sup>25</sup> The Free Church took presbyterial oversight of schools very seriously indeed, as the following minute suggests

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>25</sup> Brief entries, with slight variations, are to be found as follows: Established Presbytery Records, 3 and 7 February 1849; 3 February 1850, 6 February and 11 April 1850; 4 February and 5 May 1852; 12 January 1853, 1 February 1854; 7 February 1855; 6 February 1856; 3 February 1858; 2 February 1859; 1 February 1860; 6 February 1861; 5 February 1862; 21 January 1864, 1 February 1865; 7 February 1866; 6 February 1867, 5 February 1868.



The standing committee for the examination of schools gave in a verbal report anent the mode of conducting the examination of Schools, in which they recommended a more equitable distribution of work, among the examining committees, and that these Committees should be so arranged as that each minister shall have the opportunity in a series of years of seeing all the schools in the Presbytery.<sup>26</sup>

With emergent teacher professionalism<sup>27</sup> church and school remained closely tied. Kirk Sessions had a free hand in the selection of their schoolmasters<sup>28</sup> who often served as Session Clerk as well.<sup>29</sup> With such close control of their institutions of learning, the churches were able to prescribe what religious content they desired. The Dundee Sessional Schools, of which there were six in the town in 1850<sup>30</sup> were conducted along the line of John Wood's Sessional School in Edinburgh. We can surmise that the parochial schools and others would have had no less of a religious content:

Religion played its usual part in the work of the schools. There was a prayer at the beginning and end of each day. All classbooks contained a large proportion of religious and moral instruction. On Mondays the children read a chapter from the Old Testament, on Tuesdays one from the Gospels or the Acts, on Thursdays one from the Psalms, Proverbs or Prophets, on Fridays one from the Epistles. Wednesday brought a lesson on the Catechism or Scripture biography, while every Saturday contained an examination of the week's work. In general, however, there was no public examination on the subjects

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Free Church Presbytery Records, 12 March 1845; 16 March 1847., 10 March 1852; 9 March 1853; 3 April 1855; 11 March 1856; 11 March 1857; 7 April 1858; 8 February 1860; 13 March 1861; 12 February 1862; 11 February 1863; 6 April 1864; 13 March 1867; 11 March 1868; 9 March 1870; 8 March 1871.

<sup>26</sup> Free Church Presbytery Records, Examination of Schools, 7 April 1858.

<sup>27</sup> We find this growing teacher professionalism reflected in a decision from the Free Church Presbytery that "the mode of examination ought to give prominence to their "aptness to teach", a quality very different from that of scholarship, and which can only be ascertained by seeing the candidate teach a school or class". *Ibid.*, 15 March 1848.

<sup>28</sup> St Paul's Church South Kirk Session Records, 28 December 1863.

<sup>29</sup> Minutes of the Session of Lundie and Fowlis Parish Church, 30 November 1863;

Minutes of Session of Parish of Mains and Strathmartine, 23 June 1851.

<sup>30</sup> Scotland, *Scottish Education*, i, 247.

studied. From time to time prizes were distributed, given for class work.<sup>31</sup>

Religious instruction, then, was an integral part of elementary education, and while the local church records do not reveal much, we can see from the following how such instruction was part and parcel, a good part we may say, of the life of a church school. When a scheme was drawn up for the erection of a new school in connection with St John's Free Church Parish in 1843, the second point of the scheme was

The School shall be for the instruction of children and adults or children only of the labouring, manufacturing or other poorer classes in the said district in religious and useful knowledge – such religious education being according to the principles of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechism.<sup>32</sup>

It is no surprise, therefore, to find opposition from the churches in Dundee to proposed developments in education as early as April 1847. In that year the Free Church presbyters convened in St David's Free Church, affirmed their belief in the Establishment Principle, which held that the State had a responsibility to provide, amongst other things, an adequate educational system for the nation. They then proceeded with the following honest appraisal of their situation and appreciation of the Government's intentions:

residing amidst a manufacturing population for whom we have long laboured to provide Schools and Schoolmasters, we have seen the utter inadequacy of any efforts hitherto made, either by ourselves or others to provide an Education equal in its quantity or quality to the wants of the population, or to the requirements of the times in which we live. We cannot therefore but feel a peculiar satisfaction in any efforts on the part of the State to fulfil its educational duties by aiding us in this good work. We feel bound to give to its proposals, in promotion of such objects, the most favourable construction: and we deeply sympathise with the Government in the difficulties with which, in this matter, it has to contend from the conflicting views and denominational differences existing among the various sections

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<sup>31</sup> J. Wood, "Account of the Edinburgh Sessional School" (1830), quoted in Scotland, *Scottish Education*, i, 247.

<sup>32</sup> St John's Free Church School, 11 February 1843. From the date this would appear to be one of the 124 Free Church schools which Withrington calculates were built before the Disruption. D.J. Withrington, "Adrift among the reefs of Conflicting Ideals?", 80.



into which the visible Church of Christ in these lands is divided.<sup>33</sup>

The presbytery went on to commend the Government's desire to "build on foundations already laid by the churches of the country, supplementing, extending, and perfecting what has been begun and stimulating voluntary and local zeal and liberality". Then in their fourth resolution a different note is sounded:

... we feel impelled to enter our protest against the minutes of council on education for 1846, in so far as they require a certificate of religious instruction from the managers of all Schools aided by Government irrespective of the character of the religious instruction communicated, as this would indicate, on the part of the Government, a disposition to regard as religious instruction whatever may be taught under the name, however contrary to the truth of God.<sup>34</sup>

When, in 1850, Viscount Melgund introduced his first of two education bills, the Free Church presbytery resolved to adhere to the decision of the 1847 assembly<sup>35</sup> and to encourage members to prosecute at present their own education schemes.<sup>36</sup> The Established Church took a similar stance, but not for entirely the same reasons as the Free Church. In April 1851 the presbytery petitioned against the bill, pleading the excellent state of their parochial schools, the perfectly unsectarian nature of these schools which children of all denominations attended, and indicating that they were resolutely opposed to change:

That this court will resist by every competent means, any change in the constitution of these schools, the tendency of which would be to alienate them in their connexion with the Church, or to divest them of their character of Bible Schools, as it appears to this Court, that the religious element now sought by many to be excluded has been, for ages, their honour, their glory, and one great cause of their success; and moreover

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<sup>33</sup> Free Church Presbytery Records, 26 April 1847.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 February 1850.

<sup>36</sup> The records suggest some were relaxing their efforts "in the hope of speedily obtaining a good national system". *Ibid.*, 12 March 1851. It was carried by a majority of 14 to 7.

essentially necessary for the highest aim of all schools – the godly upbringing of children.<sup>37</sup>

This desire to retain a close connection between church and schools was re-echoed three years later by the schoolmasters of the presbytery. They also expressed alarm at the idea of local boards being responsible for schools.<sup>38</sup>

Opposition from both presbyteries continued when the bills of 1854 and 1855 were put forward.<sup>39</sup> In 1854 the Rev. William Wilson of Free St Paul's, Dundee, published a pamphlet, in which he expressed his reservations about the Moncrieff Bill, which proposed, *inter alia*, severing the school from connection with the church. To this proposal he replied

It has been asserted indeed, that education is not the business of the Church: that she should not in any way charge herself with it, and that consequently to destroy the confection between church and school, would be to rid the former of an incumbrance. I *toto coelo* differ from that opinion ... Education is a matter with which the Church is bound very especially to concern herself....<sup>40</sup>

He went on to express his fears about who the populace might elect as schoolmasters:

In this town of Dundee there is not more than half the population, and we may safely say not more than half the percentage, who belong to any Protestant Church whatsoever. It would be difficult to believe that these parents, despising religion themselves, would be very scrupulous about the character of their schoolmasters.... Are such parents, whose personal religion is mere form, and the godly instruction of whose families neglected at home – are they likely to take much interest in the election of a schoolmaster?... In Dundee, at least, he would be a bold man who would affirm that the religious

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<sup>37</sup> Established Presbytery Records, 2 April 1851.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 January 1851. Part of Resolution 4 reads, "The internal discipline of a school is a matter of too much delicacy for a non-professional body of men to interfere with".

<sup>39</sup> Free Church Presbytery Records, 14 March 1854. A petition to the House of Commons on this and other points followed the next month. *Ibid.*, 4 April 1854; 24 April 1855; Established Presbytery Records, 3 April 1854, 4 April 1855.

<sup>40</sup> W. Wilson, *Education: a plea for congregational schools* (Dundee, 1854). 14.

character of the schoolmaster would be secured by the parentage and the ratepayers.<sup>41</sup>

Wilson received an immediate rejoinder from a lay critic, who objected, in particular, to the minister's point that "by making schools as far as practicable congregational, you secure the religious element":

If ever the form of religious instruction was preserved in our parish schools in the days gone by, such a state of things was not, indeed, owing to any connection subsisting between the school and the church as established, but was only a fitting homage rendered to the state of public opinion as then existing; and this ... will constitute, in our judgment, a guarantee for its continuance in the days that are to come far more powerful than any that can possibly be derived from mere legislative enactment, congregational connection, or from any other similar provision whatever.<sup>42</sup>

This anonymous author spoke for the rising generation for whom secularism was a way of life. Seven years later, when the Court of Session ruled that an Elgin burgh schoolmaster ought to take the religious test and be subject to presbytery examination, Dundee was one of several town councils which protested angrily to the Lord Advocate that they had managed burgh schools for centuries with very little presbyterial interference.<sup>43</sup> By the end of the 1860s, in fact, a noted impatience with the churchmen enters the records. In May 1869 a Report was read to the General Council of the Dundee Institute in which it was stated that "toleration of religious opinion is now a settled article of our political faith", and that:

Your Committee are, therefore, strongly of the opinion that, Ministers and Schoolmasters, though able enough to estimate the educational deficiencies of Scotland, are not to be trusted in providing a remedy; and while they would gladly cooperate with them as citizens, they hesitate to acknowledge the authority they arrogate to themselves, and question alike the

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

<sup>42</sup> A. Layman, *Structures on the Rev. William Wilson's Plea for Congregational Schools* (Dundee, 1854), 10-11.

<sup>43</sup> W.H. Bain, "'Attacking the Citadel': James Moncrieff's Proposals to reform Scottish Education, 1865-69", *Scottish Educational Review*, vol. x (1978), no. 1, 9.



wisdom and justice of the decisions at which they have already arrived".<sup>44</sup>

In the run-up to the 1872 Education Act, the local church records, and increasingly also, the two local newspapers, record the intensity of the debate, and the gradual shifting of ground and bowing to the inevitable. As the decade began, however, the Free Church assembly, in spite of almost "coffers empty" for the Education Scheme, and teachers likely to suffer financially<sup>45</sup> appeared to start quite resolute:

... the Assembly declare that a clause in any Bill for Scotland requiring the Bible to be read in the schools, will be welcomed with great satisfaction by this Church, provided it be so worded as not to be capable of a construction which would exclude the use and wont of Scottish religious education by means of the Shorter Catechism.<sup>46</sup>

A conciliatory note, however, appears in that same resolution, which had been preferred by 69 votes over a more strongly worded one:

And the Assembly further declare that, while a recognition in the Bill of the use and wont of Scottish religious education would be very desirable, they would not insist upon a special clause to that effect as an indispensable condition of a settlement, provided the whole matter of the arrangement as to the ordinary Branches of Education, including religious instruction, be left to the discretion of local Committees, and provided the leading provisions of the measure be otherwise in accordance with the substance of what is contained in the deliverance.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Scotch Education: Report of the Committee on Parliamentary Bills, to the General Council of the Dundee Institute*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> *The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record*, 1 March 1870, 56. Free Church teachers were still loyal to their Church's education principles. They objected to a system of national education which excluded religion, objected equally strongly to restricting religious instruction to certain hours of the day. For, "... in the case of many Free Church Schools it would render impracticable the imparting of religious instruction as it has hitherto been communicated; that it would deprive the Teacher, for most of the Schoolday, of all power to refer to religion either as a means of discipline or for any other purpose;..." *Memorial on Religious Education by Free Church Teachers*, 1870.

<sup>46</sup> *Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*. VI. 1869-73, May 1870, 164-5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* This second motion was preferred over the first, which had read: "...this Assembly declare their conviction, in anticipation of any Bill for Scotland, that, whilst

A similar softening of attitude is found in the Established presbytery's records. In March 1871, they debated the education bill. Of the three resolutions passed, the one which was accepted was that of Dr Archibald Watson, later to play a leading role on both burgh and landward school boards. His deliverance was more concerned with a compulsory clause for securing attendance of all children under fourteen years, than it was for religious instruction in schools!<sup>48</sup>

By this time it was no longer a matter for the churches alone to deliberate. In March 1871, also, the magistrates and town council of Dundee had resolved to petition Parliament in favour of the Lord Advocate's bill generally<sup>49</sup> and, if there was to be a Scotch Education Board, they wanted Dundee to be directly represented by one member on the Board.<sup>50</sup>

In January 1872, Lord Advocate Young addressed his constituents in Stranraer on the education bill. He thought that the denominational system was out of the question. Any attempt to legislate on the basis of "use and wont" he regarded as equally hopeless. The choosing of the schoolmaster and the management of the school board should be placed entirely in the hands of a school board elected by the ratepayers.<sup>51</sup> That same week both the *Dundee Courier and Argus* and the *Advertiser* reported on a public meeting at the Music Hall, Aberdeen, during which the Lord Advocate's speech at Stranraer came in for a lot of criticism. Dr Nicholson of Edinburgh had two resolutions passed:

That it is essential to any national system of education that the Bible shall be read and taught in all the national schools, and that during the regular school hours. That Scotland is entitled to retain in her own hand the management and control of her own schools.<sup>52</sup>

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in connection with due recognition of religious instruction as heretofore, the ordinary branches of education, including religious instruction, according to use and wont, might be left to the discretion of local committees, it would be of the utmost importance were the legislature now to declare and secure that the Word of God shall be retained in all the National Schools of the United Kingdom". *Ibid.*, 164. See also for March 1871 (366-7).

<sup>48</sup> Established Presbytery Records, 8 March 1871; cutting of report of Established Presbytery on the Education Bill, March 8, 1871, Lamb Collection, cat. no. 204 (24).

<sup>49</sup> Scotch Education Bill. Representation to the Right Honourable the Lord Advocate by the Magistrates and Town Council of Dundee, 11 March, 1871. Lamb Collection, cat. no. 204 (30).

<sup>50</sup> Dundee Town Council Minutes, 1869-79, 4 March 1871.

<sup>51</sup> *The Dundee Advertiser*, 9 January 1872, 2.

<sup>52</sup> *The Dundee Courier and Argus*, Friday, 12 January 1872.

As interest mounted, and as other bodies such as the Scottish National League held their meetings in Dundee to promote secular education<sup>53</sup> as letters to the editor flowed in in favour of secular education, or for retaining the existing system,<sup>54</sup> the editor of the *Courier and Argus* devoted an editorial to giving the reading public a synopsis of the leading protagonists in the religious question. Writing with rare insight and sympathy, he went on to say:

... The use and wont of the country in this respect has been determined (in the past) by the will of the people, not by legislative enactment. We have no doubt that the people will it to be so still. Something, it is true, is occasionally heard as to the absurdity of whipping the Bible and Catechism into children. It is easy to put the matter in that way, but it is a considerable demand on one's belief to argue that because a child is punished for negligence in the preparation of a lesson from the Bible or Catechism – though we are rather averse to the bible being used as an ordinary 'task' book – that he will have an abhorrence of one or other ever after.... What the Lord Advocate proposes to do in the matter of religious instruction does not satisfy the extreme men of either side, but it fairly meets the circumstances of the country. Religious teaching is not enforced, and it is not to be paid for out of the Parliamentary grant.... the Education Bill presents a fair settlement of the religious difficulty. It has the advantage, which we think a considerable one, of not treating religion as a thing to be taught only by the clerical profession. No other settlement than such an one as is proposed by the Lord Advocate is possible, unless the large majority of persons who wish to have combined religious and secular instruction in the elementary schools as at present, are to yield to the ministry who are crying out for separation.<sup>55</sup>

The Lord Advocate justified his stance before a meeting of United Presbyterian ministers from Edinburgh and Glasgow: what he was

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Saturday, 20 January 1872; *The Dundee Advertiser*, Tuesday, 19 March 1872, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> E.g. a letter on 26 January from A.B. Donald, commanded the secularists for detesting "the idea of compelling people to pay for the teaching of doctrines in which they may not believe". This was replied to a few days later by one D. Petrie, who advocated that the Bible as a divinely-appointed book of principles should be read in all schools. *Dundee Advertiser*, 26, 30 January 1872.

<sup>55</sup> *The Dundee Courier and Argus*, Monday, 29 January 1872, p. 2.



proposing, with regard to the time-tabling of religious instruction, was what was common practice already – “a short time for religious instruction at the beginning of the day, varying from ten minutes to three quarters of an hour, but generally half an hour on average”.<sup>56</sup>

Early in February, Lord Kinnauld’s bill, which proposed to retain the parochial school system, and the Lord Advocate’s bill, were introduced in Parliament.<sup>57</sup> The Established presbytery at once petitioned both Houses of Parliament against the Advocate’s bill, as it altogether superseded their parochial school establishment, and gave no guarantee of a religious element in education.<sup>58</sup>

On Saturday 2 March, a meeting of the Scottish National Education League was held in the Watt Institute Hall, Dundee, chaired by Dr Archibald Watson of the parish church. He made it clear from the chair that he felt that the time had come for meeting half-way:

... he believed that the time was come when they all found it necessary to make some mutual concessions on the matter.<sup>59</sup>

He was followed by the Rev. Knight of the Free church, who continued in like vein:

They had been told there was “no happy medium” on the question. He thought there was; and that it only required a little corporate self-denial amongst the religious bodies in the land, with a belief that others had got hold of an educational truth as well as themselves, to enable them to unite, sinking their differences; and in so doing the major part of their difficulties would disappear. He thought they might all retain their different opinions on questions of detail while they agreed to a working compromise.<sup>60</sup>

As late as March 1872 the Established Synod of Angus and Mearns decided in favour of Lord Kinnauld’s bill, and agreed to petition against the Lord Advocate’s.<sup>61</sup> At the same time the Free Church presbytery

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<sup>56</sup> *The Dundee Advertiser*, 2 February 1872, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Lord Kinnauld introduced a Parochial Schools (Scotland) Bill into the Lords on 8 February, and Lord Advocate Young announced his bill in the Commons on 12 February.

<sup>58</sup> Established Presbytery Records, 22 February 1872.

<sup>59</sup> *The Dundee Advertiser*, Tuesday, 5 March 1872, p. 3. “Scottish National Education League. Influential Meeting in Dundee”.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *The Dundee Courier and Argus*, Wednesday, 13 March 1872.

declared in favour of the Lord Advocate's bill.<sup>62</sup> Last ditch attempts were being made by the Established presbytery to halt the Lord Advocate's bill. The people in the parishes were circularized and asked whether they wanted the Bible put out of school or not, and if they were prepared to sign a petition against the Lord Advocate's bill.<sup>63</sup> By contrast, in the two Dundee papers the proceedings of the Free Church Assembly of May were reported, showing relief at the near passage of the education bill, but continued division within Free Church ranks. The relief is evident in a reference to a decrease of £1,109 8s 4d in givings for the education scheme from the previous year, followed by this comment:

The Committee welcome with joyful and devout thankfulness to God the resolution of the House of Commons with reference to the Lord Advocate's Education Bill, adopted on 6th May last in a full House of 511 members.<sup>64</sup>

The division is seen in that Dr Elder's motion in favour of the Lord Advocate's bill was passed by a majority of 169 over Dr Hugh Martin's motion that the Advocate's bill did not meet the principle of the Free Church that there should be national Christian education.

In its amended form, the Education (Scotland) Act, which received the royal assent on 6 August 1872, was a victory for religion if not for denominationalism. The preamble originally had no reference to the teaching of religion. The Lords, however, led by the Duke of Richmond, introduced an amendment, which stated in effect that religious teaching had always been enjoined by law in the parochial schools of Scotland. This statement was, however, modified by the Lord Advocate to read

And whereas it has been the custom in the public schools of Scotland to give instruction in religion to children whose parents did not object to the instruction given, but with liberty to parents, without forfeiting any of the other advantages of the schools, to elect that their children should not receive such instruction, and it is expedient that the managers of public schools shall be at liberty to continue the said custom.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, Thursday, 14 March 1872. The Free Church Presbytery did not even bother to examine Kinnaird's Bill, because of its emphasis. 15 March 1872, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, Monday, 15 April 1872.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, Friday, 31 May 1872.

<sup>65</sup> *The Dundee Advertiser*, Friday, 16 August 1872, p. 2.

Provision for religious, but not denominational instruction, was referred to in the famous "conscience clause", Clause 74. and assigned to the beginning and/or end of the school day.<sup>66</sup> It remained to be seen whether the fears which the Rev. Knight had expressed, of the prospect of denominational rivalries and disputes on the school boards, would be realised.

Although school board elections did not take place universally, an election was held for the fifteen places on the Dundee Burgh School Board.<sup>67</sup> When nominations closed on 11 March 1873 the list stretched to 38 nominees. The names revealed the strong interest which the churches held in the election. Eleven of the nominees were clergymen: three Established Church, three Free Church, two United Presbyterian, one Episcopalian, one Baptist and one Roman Catholic. Taking ministers and lay adherents together there were ten of the Free Church, six of the Established Church, four of the United Presbyterians, three Baptists, two Roman Catholics, two Congregationalists, and one Episcopalian. Election date was 18 March. The turnout, from a possible 22,000 electors, was only about 33%.<sup>68</sup>

The way the Roman Catholics were organised to vote is very interesting. In the Lochee area of Dundee alone, 13.9% of the population was Catholic,<sup>69</sup> though the Catholic population was by no means confined to Lochee.<sup>70</sup> The point to be stressed, however, is that with the Catholic population growing, it was outstripping their school provision.<sup>71</sup> With a compulsory clause introduced into the education

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<sup>66</sup> "Every public school, and every school subject to inspection and in receipt of any public money as herein-before provided, shall be open to children of all denominations, and any child may be withdrawn by his parents from any instruction in religious subjects, and from any religious observance, in any such school; and no child shall in any such school be placed at any disadvantage with respect to the secular instruction given therein by reason of the denomination to which such child or his parents belong, or by reason of his being withdrawn from any instruction in religious subjects. The time or times during which any religious observance is practised or instruction in religious subjects is given at any meeting of the school for elementary instruction shall be either at the beginning or at the end, or at the beginning and at the end of such meeting, and shall be specified in a Table approved by the Scotch Education Department". *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, Tuesday 5 March 1872, 3.

<sup>68</sup> B. Lenman & J. Stocks, "The Beginnings of State Education in Scotland", in *Scottish Educational Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1972, 95.

<sup>69</sup> *The Dundee Courier and Argus*, 19 March 1873.

<sup>70</sup> P. Harris, *Scotching the Myth of Dundee*. (Centre for Tayside and Fife Studies, Occasional Paper no. 7), 2,4,5. Fig. 4 on p. 19 gives the following percentage of Catholics, 1841 – 3%, 1851 – 13.3%, 1861 – 13.9%, 1871 – 13.2%, 1881 – 10.6%

<sup>71</sup> Expenditure of Catholic Schools in Eastern District of Scotland for various periods during the last twenty-five years (1854-1878). Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh,



bill, the poor attendance record which Catholic children had nationally, but particularly in the big cities, could only be remedied by their attendance at board schools. This being the case, the comment in the *Courier and Argus* about how the cumulative vote would affect results, and the understanding that Catholic voters would “go to a man for their nominees”, does suggest a concerted effort to obtain Catholic representation on the Board.<sup>72</sup> As to how this was accomplished, the *Courier and Argus* provided this lighthearted insight:

Illiterate Irish tended to get polling sheriffs to mark their papers, so there would be no mistake. In one case the following colloquy took place: An old woman entered the booth and asked for a voting paper. Sheriff – “can you read?” Old woman (as loud as she could shout) – “No sure I can’t.” Sheriff – “Well, who are you to vote for?” Old woman – “put down eight for Father Macmanus and seven for Doctor MacDonald: that’s who I’m to vote for”.<sup>73</sup>

The two above-named gentlemen were returned at the head of the poll, which indicates a very efficient campaign.

Though the percentage who voted was small, it was not a vote against the clergy who stood. Nine of the successful candidates were clergymen.<sup>74</sup> The two main Presbyterian churches had joined to form, in 1871, the Scottish Educational Association, which encouraged Free and Established church candidates to stand in the elections of 1873 as advocates of “use and wont”. It proved to be a successful manoeuvre. Dundee was only one of many towns where the use and wont party was swept into power. This effectively secured the place of religious education in the board schools of Dundee.<sup>75</sup> The clergy remained

Ms. ED/9/13. Over a period of twenty-five years Dundee received £16,461 for the development of Catholic schools, and this seems to have divided fairly evenly between the schools centred on St Andrew’s Cathedral in the Nethergate, and those centred on St Mary’s Lochee.

<sup>72</sup> Scotland, *Scottish Education*, i, 183. The attendance of Catholic children at Protestant schools was by this time of quite long standing. Bone points out that “In 1929 ... the General Assembly had opened its schools to Roman Catholics, and had directed its teachers not to press upon Catholic children any instruction to which their parents or priests might object”, T.R. Bone, *School Inspection in Scotland, 1840-1966* (London, 1968), 32.

<sup>73</sup> *The Dundee Courier and Argus*, 15 March 1873.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 March 1873.

<sup>75</sup> In the early triennial elections the clergy were the best represented group. In 1873, 1450 ministers of religion were elected nationwide, making about one quarter of the seats. Lenman and Stocks, *State Education*, 95.

strongly represented on the school boards, being in a majority on the burgh board particularly for the next four triennial elections: after which, in 1888, the number dropped to six, as the merchant class became more predominant, and several clergy did not make the cut.<sup>76</sup> Another increasing feature was the election of retired teachers. In 1891 Miss Jessie Gordon Shaw, retired schoolmistress, came a narrow second in the poll to the Rev. Dr Peter Grant of Cross of St John's Church. Miss Shaw was also the first successful woman candidate.<sup>77</sup>

With regard to the implementation of use and wont, a very amicable transition took place:

By a resolution of the Board, the Bible as a religious book, is alone taught in the new schools erected by the Board all previously existing schools being allowed to continue the practice that had previously prevailed. A very commendable feature in the Board is the absence of the denominational feeling which has been so marked in some other Boards. When the first election of the School Board took place, a good deal of this feeling was exhibited; but since then it has been conspicuous by its absence – the sole aim of the members having apparently been to carry out the Act in a wider and liberal spirit.<sup>78</sup>

Towards the end of the first school board's term of office, further testimony was given to how these fifteen clergymen and laymen of various persuasions managed to work together harmoniously, in an article entitled "The Religious Difficulty Escaped":

The Board must be gratified to record that what has been termed the religious difficulty has not arisen during the administration. The members have wrought most harmoniously. They very early resolved that, subject to the provisions of the Education Code, the use and wont in all transferred schools should be continued, and that as regards all new schools religious instruction should be confined to the Scriptures. No difficulty of any kind has arisen in carrying out this simple and

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<sup>76</sup> G.C. Hutchinson, *A Political History of Scotland 1832-1924* (Edinburgh, 1986), 121.

<sup>77</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>78</sup> Results of Triennial Election, April 1891. Minutes of the Dundee School Board, 6 April 1891.

reasonable solution of a question which, under other circumstances, might have caused conflict of opinion.<sup>79</sup>

Six years later, however, and again in 1882, problems surfaced when attempts were made by Free Church board members to have the Shorter Catechism introduced. The voting on this in 1882 indicates there was still strong support on the Board for the Reformed Faith as expressed in the Shorter Catechism. The Catholic and Episcopalian members on the board, however, voted against the use of the Catechism, and the matter was then dropped.<sup>80</sup>

There were two landward schools within the presbytery, Drumgeith and Monikie. With regard to the Drumgeith school, with its board of five chaired by Dr Archibald Watson, who also chaired the burgh school board until his death in 1881, there is no direct reference to "use and wont", but plenty of references to religious instruction being given.<sup>81</sup> Monikie school, where the ministers were in a majority, began emphatically in favour of use and wont. They then set their times for religious instruction and observance at "the first three quarters of an hour of the forenoon meeting, and the last quarter of an hour of the afternoon"... So well organised in this respect was the predominantly clerical first board, that when early in 1878 the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland offered the services of their Inspector of Religious Knowledge, the offer was declined as they were looking after that aspect of school life well themselves.<sup>82</sup>

A victory for use and wont was a satisfactory starting point for all concerned with the continuance of religious instruction in the board schools. A further cause for concern could be expressed like this – just what standing would religious instruction have in board schools as a non-schedule subject, and how would the teaching of it suffer as a result, when various pressures, not least financial, militated against the subject being treated seriously? Would, as Hetherington predicted, the removal of religious teaching from the formal timetable "amount to a

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<sup>79</sup> Short Outline of the work of the School Board 1873-4, Lamb Collection 212 (22); Minutes of the Dundee School Board, February 1876.

<sup>80</sup> Work of the Dundee School Board. 14 February 1876, Lamb Collection cat. no. 212 (4).

<sup>81</sup> Minutes of the Dundee School Board, 9 June 1879, 1 May 1882.

<sup>82</sup> Dundee (Landward) School Board 1873-1919, Board meetings 9 April & 30 June 1873; 14 June 1878. See also 7 June 1879, April 1880; Drumgeith School log Book, 24 July 1876; 21 June 1878.



practical banishment of religious teaching from public schools altogether?"<sup>83</sup>

The earliest reference to this in the board or school log minutes is for Drumgeith School in June 1874. There, Mr James Keith, schoolmaster from 1873 till his retiral in 1914, appears to have been taking the older scholars, probably Standard VI, through the books of the Old Testament consecutively, in what was termed "Bible Class" activities. On 22 June, they began to revise the book of Genesis, by December had finished Deuteronomy, and were starting Joshua.<sup>84</sup> In his quarterly report for January 1875, he recorded that the catechising of the first Bible class was very efficient. By March of that year the class had progressed to Samuel.<sup>85</sup>

As far as we can discern a strategy for religious instruction in the burgh board schools, this becomes clear from 1880 on, when the first references appear, and show the board prepared to adapt and change what had been longstanding procedures. On 12 April of that year, the board declared that questions should be drawn up for examination in religious instruction, on set passages of the Old and New Testaments.<sup>86</sup> It did seem, however, at that point, to consist partly of repetition of memory texts from the Bible.<sup>87</sup> A list of prizes and certificates were awarded to pupils, a prize for 75% and over, a certificate for 50-75%.<sup>88</sup> By 1883, written scriptural examinations were being held.<sup>89</sup> From the late 1880s on a detailed syllabus of scripture instruction, often a whole page, was included in the printed board minutes, and was laid out for all seven levels from Infants to Standard VI. Common to all levels was the requirement to learn the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments (not all for the first two levels); something that had not changed from pre-1872 days.<sup>90</sup>

What is recorded in the School Board minutes is backed up by those school log books which recorded anything of value. Ancrum Road School, still in existence today, records the conducting of oral

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<sup>83</sup> Monikie School Board Minute Book 1873-1901, 30 April, 17 July 1873; 6 December 1875; repeated 3 January 1876.

<sup>84</sup> Hetherington, *National Education*, 10.

<sup>85</sup> Drumgeith School Log book, 1874-1908, 22 June, 2 December 1874.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 January, 22 March 1875.

<sup>87</sup> Minutes of the Dundee School Board, 12 April 1880.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 May 1880.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 June 1880.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 June 1883. The minute also records a list of pupils who earned marks of 75% and upwards and between 50% and 75%, and to whom prizes and certificates were awarded. This was a definitive incentive to learn.

examination in religious knowledge in the 1880s.<sup>91</sup> Liff Road School, formerly Lochee Sessional, has records going back to 1864. Throughout the 1860s there is ample evidence of religious instruction being given, including the Shorter Catechism with scripture proofs.<sup>92</sup> After 1872 there is still good evidence of a similar amount of religious instruction, but the Catechism is no longer read.<sup>93</sup>

A significant amount of Biblical instruction does seem to have been imparted, followed by annual examinations and inspections. One does get the distinct impression, however, that the effective learning and teaching so much emphasised in our schools at the present time, was not a concept much entertained by the educators of that day. The American Horace Mann, during his 1843 tour, found Scots pupils at religious instruction to be “vying for intellectual superiority”.<sup>94</sup> He went on to write:

... in these schools where religious creeds, and forms of faith, and modes of worship were directly taught, I found the common doctrines and inductions of morality, and the meaning of the perceptive parts of the Gospel, to be much less taught, and much less understood by the pupils, than in the same grade of schools, and by the same classes of pupils, with us.<sup>95</sup>

Mann was probably unaware that another nineteenth-century work was often used in conjunction with the Catechism – John Whitecross’

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 October 1888; 10 October 1890.

<sup>92</sup> Ancrum Road School Log Book, 1875-1910, 30 August 1875; 18 June 1890.

<sup>93</sup> Liff Road School Log Book, 19 September 1865, Bible Class on Exodus and Matthew; November 1865, geography of Palestine; 22 November 1865, Bible class begins Leviticus; 19 December 1865, Bible and Testament classes joined for revisal; 20 December 1865, Bible class commence Shorter Catechism with scripture proofs; 19 February 1866, Testament class revise Catechism; 19 March 1866, Bible class revise Shorter Catechism with proofs as far as learned; 5 July 1866, first and second classes have commenced the Shorter Catechism with proofs; 12 May 1868, beginning of revision of catechism; 9 February 1870, second Bible class begin to revise Genesis; 20 December 1870, first Bible class revise Acts.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 December 1872, second Bible class resume Luke. 28 May 1873, first Bible class begin Genesis; 3 February 1874, School inspected in Bible knowledge by Mr McQuarrie; 15 February 1878, inspection of religious instruction; 16 June 1891, examination in Bible knowledge; 27 June 1892, Dr Connel conducted the Bible examination this afternoon; 22 June 1894, Rev. Dr Connel examined the pupils in Scripture knowledge today.

<sup>95</sup> H. Mann. *Report of an Educational Tour in Germany, France, Holland, and parts of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1857), 175.

"Anecdotes Illustrative of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism".<sup>96</sup> While not perhaps used in schools, this compilation of simple anecdotes from nature or history was designed to be used in the sabbath school and in the home, and may have driven home the point better than the mere recital of an answer to a catechism question. Yet even allowing for American secular bias, there is probably a fair bit of truth in what Mann is hinting at here, that the rote and regurgitation methods used resulted in many of the pupils reading and learning with limited understanding.

While the population of Dundee, as we have noted, had drifted away in large measure from the churches, it can nevertheless be argued that the churches did continue to exert a strong influence over the religious life of the district for the rest of the nineteenth century at least, even though church attendance figures did not rise again<sup>97</sup> for three main reasons.

First of all the "use and wont" controlled school boards found they now had a captive audience to whom they could give religious instruction. Although there were always defaulters to be dealt with<sup>98</sup> the

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. Drummond & Bulloch, *The Church in Victorian Scotland*, 100: "As for the nature of education, there was little change for it was still seen in terms, not of the development of the child mind, but of the inculcation of information through constant repetition and drilling in facts which were not to be questioned".

<sup>97</sup> While official attendance figures do not rise, the following should be borne in mind; from the time of the visit of D.L. Moody to Britain in 1873, preaching with particular success in Edinburgh and Glasgow, mission halls sprang up all over the country, and Dundee was dotted with them. Many working class people would attend these missions rather than the churches which had become middle-class and respectable. These missions are not included, for example, in the 1881 census.

<sup>98</sup> The report of February 1876 on the work of the outgoing first burgh School Board, shows, in paragraph 14, how assiduous they were in putting the compulsory clause into effect: "In view of the 5682 children within School age totally ignorant of their letters, and of the 6173 other children within School age more or less ignorant, the importance of attending to the compulsory means provided by the Statute for enforcing attendance at School could hardly be overrated. Accordingly, within two months of their appointment the Board framed for the guidance of the Officer whom they had previously elected, careful rules for the discharge of his duties, and having armed him with all requisite assistance, it should be recorded that the results have been of the most gratifying character. The method adopted was this. Systematic visitations from house to house were made, and inquiries were also made regarding all children found wandering on the streets or elsewhere, during school hours. If the reasons given for the absence of the children from School were not satisfactory, and if the parents did not undertake to send them at once to school, notices were served on the parents calling upon them to comply with the requirements of the Statute. If they failed to attend to these notices they were summoned to appear before the Board.... The Board have thus had little trouble in getting children sent to School. The chief difficulty is in ensuring their regular attendance. To aid in overcoming this difficulty, the Board is supplied by Teachers with monthly returns of the attendance of all children received into Schools in consequence



boards now had an increasing number of children under their care. By March 1885 the number of children of school age was estimated at 23,052, and by February 1888, it was up to 31,797.<sup>99</sup> While the amount of time devoted to religious instruction, as a non-schedule subject, was less than many churchmen and board members may have wanted, this could be compensated for by the much greater number of children receiving that instruction. And where schools remained denominational, they would no doubt devote a bit more time, not only to religious instruction, but also to denominational formularies,<sup>100</sup> and presbyterial examinations. The Free Church presbytery, for example, carried out examination of schools for most of the rest of the century.<sup>101</sup>

Secondly, not only for Dundee, but for Scotland as a whole, it is of great significance that the teacher training colleges, the Normal Schools, remained in the control of the main presbyterian churches until 1906. Both the Established and Free Church colleges gave an important place to religious instruction in their syllabus.<sup>102</sup> Even before entry the committees appointed to choose the best candidates for admission (two thirds would be turned away), "gave special consideration to those who did well in the religious test".<sup>103</sup> The Free Church recognised the cruciality of its normal schools soon after 1872.

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of the compulsory orders of the Board". Report to the School Board of the Burgh of Dundee by the Chairman and Clerk, February 1876.

<sup>99</sup> Report to the School Board of the Burgh of Dundee by the Chairman and Clerk. March 1885., Triennial Report of the School Board of the Burgh of Dundee, February 1888.

<sup>100</sup> It was a gradual transition from mainly church controlled and various private schools, to board schools in Dundee. In 1879 there were still 51 schools not under the Board, with 14 board schools. By session 1891-92 this had changed to 11 denominational schools and 20 board schools. Minutes of the Dundee School Board, Attendance Returns from Teachers, Session 1878-79, Session 1891-92.

<sup>101</sup> Free Church Presbytery Records, 11 March 1874; 14 June 1876, 12 December 1877; 12 June, 11 September 1878; 24 July 1879; April 1881; 4 October 1882; 11 June 1884; 11 July 1888; 25 June 1889; 8 July 1891; 13 July 1892.

<sup>102</sup> The Free Church Normal School at Edinburgh, for example included the following in its syllabus:

| <u>Male Students' Timetable</u> |                                  | <u>Female Students' Timetable</u> |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Mon 10-11 am                    | Scripture (2 <sup>nd</sup> year) | Mon 9-10am                        | Scripture (both years)           |
| Tues 10-11am                    | Scripture (1 <sup>st</sup> year) | 12-1pm                            | Catechism (1 <sup>st</sup> year) |
| Wed 10-11am                     | Scripture (both years)           | Tues 11-12am                      | Scripture (2 <sup>nd</sup> year) |
| Fri 10-11am                     | Catechism (1 <sup>st</sup> year) | Wed 9-10am                        | Scripture (both years)           |
| 2-3 pm                          | Scripture (2 <sup>nd</sup> year) | Fri 11-12am                       | Scripture (1 <sup>st</sup> year) |

(M. Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland* (London, 1970). 24, 3-5.)

<sup>103</sup> Scotland, *Scottish Education*, ii, 100.

and in a resolution at its General Assembly in May 1876, put on record the following:

That the maintenance in full efficiency of the Normal School instruction, at present so successfully carried on, is of primary importance for the general interests of education in Scotland, and bears directly on the maintenance of its religious character, and that all new proposals bearing on the training of teachers by chairs of education or otherwise must be judged of mainly with reference to that condition.<sup>104</sup>

Two years later the Assembly recorded the following:

In particular, the Assembly approve of the efforts which the Education Committee have made to secure the maintenance of the Normal School system of training for teachers, and their satisfaction with the general arrangements now in force, and with the high state of efficiency which the Report shews that the Training Colleges of the Church have reached and maintained....<sup>105</sup>

Thereafter, the Assembly recorded annually its satisfaction with the work of its several Normal Schools.<sup>106</sup> In May 1885 the following entry is found:

... [the Assembly] are gratified to know that their Normal Schools are being maintained in a state of high efficiency, and that they are amply fulfilling the great object which the Church had in view in their original institution. The Church has all along laid special stress on the religious influences brought to bear on the future teachers of the young in connection with the provision and training provided by these institutions.<sup>107</sup>

As late as 1895, the Free Church Assembly learned the fruit of this from its Education Committee, "that in many of the Board Schools there is an efficient training in Scripture Knowledge, and that religious

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<sup>104</sup> Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, vii, 1874-8, 26 May 1876, 333.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 May 1878, 582.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 May 1878, 41; 24 May 1880, 179; 27 May 1881, 332; 4 June 1883, 633; 6 May 1884, 32; 23 May 1885, 173; 31 May 1886, 335; 27 May 1887, 469; 28 May 1888, 590; 27 May 1889, 51; 26 May 1890, 201; 30 May 1891, 391; 20 May 1892, 503; 19 May 1893, 656.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 May 1885, 186.

education is carefully looked after".<sup>108</sup> The board schools of the Dundee area could certainly be included in the "many".

Thirdly, the Presbyterian churches in the Dundee area now sought to compensate for the loss of their denominational schools, by giving renewed emphasis to their sabbath schools. By 1870 these schools had lost much of their earlier educational role, being now more closely tied to the churches by Sunday-school committees.<sup>109</sup> Just as there was a close connection between the churches and the training of teachers, there also developed a close link between the Sunday school and the board school. Many Sunday school teachers became board members as well, and in their heyday (1870-1890) the Sunday schools were invested with new importance:

With the creation of the national day-school system in 1873, the churches put renewed faith in the ability of Sunday schools to maintain religious education amongst young people.<sup>110</sup>

This sentiment was put forcibly by a school board clerk at a National Sabbath School conference in 1890, in language reminiscent of some statements in those 1850s pamphlets:

The day school instruction can never supersede that of the Sabbath. Both are urgently required.... The day school furnishes the scholar with facts and doctrines, and it is to be hoped, with becoming reverence for things Divine. It is for the Sabbath school teacher, working from that basis, to deal with the heart and conscience of the individual.<sup>111</sup>

The Dundee presbytery records strongly suggest the Sabbath schools were being given a more vital role. A tightening up is to be observed from February 1873, when schemes of lessons, teacher aids, examinations and pastoral letters are discussed in the Established presbytery.<sup>112</sup> From then on careful records were kept of Sabbath

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 May 1895, 186.

<sup>109</sup> C.G. Brown, "The Sunday School movement in Scotland, 1780-1914," *ante*, xvii (1981), 6. There had come about what Brown calls the "denominationalisation" of Sunday schools, which helped prepare the way for their important role as a recruiting arm of the Church. The Sunday schools were by this time more closely tied to their churches by Sunday school committees. The Free Church committed was formed in 1844, the Church of Scotland one in 1850 but effectively from 1867 and the United Presbyterian one in 1847. *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>112</sup> Established Presbytery Records, 5 February 1873.



school statistics.<sup>113</sup> At a meeting held in September 1880, the Church of Scotland Sunday School Union for the Presbytery of Dundee was formed, to encourage the work of the Sunday schools. The fourth object of this Union was:

to awaken the church generally, and especially office bearers and parents to an adequate sense of the duty and privilege of caring for the lambs of the flock.<sup>114</sup>

For these lambs would supply the next generation of church members. It is not surprising, therefore, to find reference after this to the communicants' classes, and to the numbers admitted to church membership from these classes.<sup>115</sup> Something which is not found prior to 1872.

The Free Church presbytery also began to keep a careful record of its Sabbath schools, to hold conferences<sup>116</sup> and to ensure that the Shorter Catechism was being taught.<sup>117</sup> One area in which they were remiss was their failure to introduce, before 1885, a systematic programme of instruction.<sup>118</sup> Like the Established Church, the Free Church also began to record in its sabbath school reports the numbers who became church members. It also approved the setting up, in January 1887, of a Boys' and Girls' Religious Association, designed to reach those over thirteen years of age, who had left the board schools. For those the Free Church had in mind evening classes for Bible study during the week.<sup>119</sup>

The Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 has often been referred to as a watershed event, which saw the end of church dominance in education. Rather it should be seen as a catalyst which, together with the realisation that the influence of the churches on the religious and moral life of the nation was definitely on the wane, appears to have

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1874; 7 April 1875, 5 April 1876; 4 April 1877; 3 April 1878; 5 March 1879; 3 March 1880.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 September 1880.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 March 1881; 1 March 1882, 4 April 1883; 5 March 1884; 1 April 1885; 6 April 1887; 2 April 1890.

<sup>116</sup> Free Church Presbytery Records, 12 March 1879; 9 June 1880; 8 June 1881; 14 June 1882; 9 May 1883; 13 February, 14 May 1884; 13 May 1885; 7 April, 10 November 1886; 11 May 1887; 11 April 1888; 8 May 1889; 9 April 1890; 11 February 1891; 13 April 1892; 24 January 1893.

<sup>117</sup> St John's Free Church Kirk Session Minutes, 3 November 1880; Free Church Presbytery Records, 5 October 1887. St John's Free Church Kirk Session Minutes, 3 November 1880; Free Church Presbytery Records, 5 October 1887.

<sup>118</sup> Free Church Presbytery Records, 14 January 1885.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 December 1886; 12 January 1887.

galvanised the churches in the Dundee district, at any rate, into greater activity to reach the non-churchgoing populace, and in particular the young, so that it could be argued that their impact on the religious education of the young remained strong until at least the end of the nineteenth century. And while the desire of the Free Church as expressed in its *Monthly Record* of January 1873, "that religious instruction should not only be continued, as heretofore, but greatly improved, in our national schools"<sup>120</sup>, might not have been realised quite as they would have liked, particularly with reference to the Shorter Catechism in schools, there is surely a good case for arguing, for the Dundee area, as another has postulated on a national scale, that:

... the introduction of elected boards in 1872 did in fact put many more schools than before directly under the authority of committed churchmen, and increased rather than diminished religious influence in Scottish Education.<sup>121</sup>

An influence which continued quite strong until the turn of the century.

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<sup>120</sup> *The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record*, 1 January 1873, p. 1.

<sup>121</sup> D.J. Withrington, "How the Churches defended religion in the Education Act of 1872", *Times Educational Supplement, Scotland*, 7 January 1972.

## APPENDIX A – TRIENNIAL ELECTION RESULTS

### TRIENNIAL ELECTION OF A SCHOOL BOARD SCHOOL BOARD OF THE BURGH OF DUNDEE (1873)

|                          | Obtained | Votes |
|--------------------------|----------|-------|
| 1. Rev. Patrick MacManus | 10,392   |       |
| 2. Dr James MacDonald    | 9,745    |       |
| 3. Rev. William Knight   | 9,528    |       |
| 4. Rev. A.B. Connel      | 7,070    |       |
| 5. Rev. Dr Grant         | 5,851    |       |
| 6. James Yeaman          | 5,356    |       |
| 7. Rev. Dr Wilson        | 5,262    |       |
| 8. Frank Henderson       | 4,840    |       |
| 9. Bishop Forbes         | 4,333    |       |
| 10. Rev. Dr Watson       | 4,077    |       |
| 11. Duncan Macdonald     | 3,715    |       |
| 12. Rev. Neil Taylor     | 2,992    |       |
| 13. Dr Arrott            | 2,795    |       |
| 14. Alexander H. Moncur  | 2,706    |       |
| 15. Rev. Dr Taylor       | 2,566    |       |

(Source – *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 19 March, 1873)

### TRIENNIAL ELECTION OF A SCHOOL BOARD SCHOOL BOARD OF THE BURGH OF DUNDEE (1876)

|                             | obtained | Votes |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------|
| 1. James M'Donald           | 10,193   |       |
| 2. Rev. John Prendergast    | 8,690    |       |
| 3. Frank Henderson          | 8,197    |       |
| 4. William Blair            | 7,905    |       |
| 5. Thaddeus Clancy          | 7,867    |       |
| 6. James Arrott             | 6,547    |       |
| 7. Alevander Hay Moncur     | 6,128    |       |
| 8. Rev. Archibald B. Connel | 6,072    |       |
| 9. Rev. Peter Grant         | 6,052    |       |
| 10. Rev. William Wilson     | 5,928    |       |
| 11. Duncan Macdonald        | 5,613    |       |
| 12. Rev. Archibald Watson   | 5,320    |       |
| 13. James Logie             | 4,670    |       |
| 14. John Boyd Baxter        | 3,197    |       |
| 15. Rev. Neil Taylor        | 3,170    |       |

(Source – *Minutes of the Dundee School Board*, 10 April 1876)

### TRIENNIAL ELECTION OF A SCHOOL BOARD



SCHOOL BOARD OF THE BURGH OF DUNDEE (1879)

|     |                            |          |        |       |
|-----|----------------------------|----------|--------|-------|
| 1.  | Rev. Robert Clapperton     | obtained | 10,812 | votes |
| 2.  | James M'Ginnes             |          | 9,993  |       |
| 3.  | William Doig               |          | 6,207  |       |
| 4.  | Hugh Willoughby Jermyn     |          | 5,957  |       |
| 5.  | David Barrie Cameron       |          | 5,580  |       |
| 6.  | William Blair              |          | 5,234  |       |
| 7.  | Alexander Hay Moncur       |          | 5,052  |       |
| 8.  | Rev. Neil Taylor           |          | 4,829  |       |
| 9.  | Rev. James Ewing           |          | 4,827  |       |
| 10. | Rev. Robert Laurie         |          | 3,746  |       |
| 11. | James Logie                |          | 3,722  |       |
| 12. | William MacDougall Ogilvie |          | 3,681  |       |
| 13. | Rev. John Dunlop           |          | 3,548  |       |
| 14. | Duncan MacDonald           |          | 3,089  |       |
| 15. | Rev. Andrew Inglis         |          | 2,825  |       |

(Source – *Minutes of the Dundee School Board*, 14 April 1879)

TRIENNIAL ELECTION OF A SCHOOL BOARD  
SCHOOL BOARD OF THE BURGH OF DUNDEE (1882)

|     |                        |          |        |       |
|-----|------------------------|----------|--------|-------|
| 1.  | Alexander Hay Moncur   | obtained | 16,290 | votes |
| 2.  | Rev. Robert Clapperton |          | 14,531 |       |
| 3.  | Rev. David Macrae      |          | 13,240 |       |
| 4.  | Rev. Joseph Holder     |          | 12,876 |       |
| 5.  | Rev. Peter Grant       |          | 8,042  |       |
| 6.  | John Troup             |          | 7,122  |       |
| 7.  | Rev. Neil Taylor       |          | 7,004  |       |
| 8.  | Duncan MacDonald       |          | 6,858  |       |
| 9.  | Rev. James Nicolson    |          | 6,566  |       |
| 10. | William Hunter         |          | 6,363  |       |
| 11. | Rev. William Hamilton  |          | 6,022  |       |
| 12. | Rev. John Dunlop       |          | 5,678  |       |
| 13. | Alexander Legge        |          | 5,059  |       |
| 14. | Andrew Watson Smith    |          | 4,927  |       |
| 15. | William Doig           |          | 4,859  |       |

(Source – *Minutes of the Dundee School Board*, 12 April 1882)

TRIENNIAL ELECTION OF A SCHOOL BOARD  
SCHOOL BOARD OF THE BURGH OF DUNDEE (1885)

# DUNDEE CHURCHES AND THE COMING OF STATE EDUCATION

|     |                           |          |        |       |
|-----|---------------------------|----------|--------|-------|
| 1.  | Rev. Joseph Holder        | obtained | 14,248 | votes |
| 2.  | Rev. Robert Clapperton    |          | 14,175 |       |
| 3.  | Alexander Hay Moncur      |          | 12,350 |       |
| 4.  | Rev. Peter Grant          |          | 10,472 |       |
| 5.  | George Hood               |          | 9,844  |       |
| 6.  | Rev. David Barrie Cameron |          | 9,490  |       |
| 7.  | Duncan MacDonald          |          | 9,432  |       |
| 8.  | Rev. Alexander Legge      |          | 7,941  |       |
| 9.  | Rev. William Hamilton     |          | 7,880  |       |
| 10. | Rev. James Nicolson       |          | 7,693  |       |
| 11. | Rev. Archibald Browning   |          |        |       |
|     | Connel                    |          | 7,009  |       |
| 12. | John Watson Shepherd      |          | 6,896  |       |
| 13. | Rev. John Dunlop          |          | 6,421  |       |
| 14. | William Doig              |          | 6,335  |       |
| 15. | Andrew Watson Smith       |          | 6,231  |       |

(Source – *Minutes of the Dundee School Board*, 13 April 1885)

